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UNCLAS SAN JOSE 000587

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR PM/DTCC - BLUE LANTERN COORDINATOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KOMC ETTC CS

SUBJECT: BLUE LANTERN LEVEL 3: PRE-LICENSE END-USE CHECK
CONDUCTED ON LICENSE 050107493

REF: STATE 68489

¶1. Per Reftel request, on July 7, we met with Peter Andre, the owner of Armeria J.R. Andre and established the bona fides of the company. We consider Armeria J.R. Andre a legitimate recipient of United States Munitions List (USML) items. Andre told us he was familiar with the regulations governing the import of U.S.-origin defense articles, including restrictions on re-transfer or re-export.

¶2. Armeria J.R. Andre, located in San Jose, has been in business since 1949 and is one of the oldest gunshops in Costa Rica. Peter Andre's father, George Andre, was the original owner of the business. Peter Andre also has another gunshop in Escazu, located just outside of San Jose, called Serengeti Armeria. Andre mentioned that sales in his Armeria J.R. Andre shop were relatively low and that he kept the San Jose store open mainly due to sentimental reasons since it had been open for so long.

¶3. The company sells vintage hunting rifles, shotguns, revolvers, pistols, and related hunting accessories including knives and outdoor survival equipment. The store maintains files on all of their customers and is visited twice a week by the Ministry of Public Security's General Directorate for Arms and Explosives to review and approve purchase requests and final sales. The company has a valid license to import and sell firearms from the Ministry.

¶4. Marco Moya, the store manager, detailed the rigorous checks that a potential buyer must go through in order to legally and successfully purchase a firearm in their store (and in accordance with Costa Rican law). These requirements include:

- Proof of firearms safety course;
- psychological test;
- copy of cedula (Costa Rican national identification and voting card);
- police record;

¶5. Andre told us that the last time this store had been robbed was in the late 1980s. The store's main entrance, when closed, is secured behind a metal curtain that is locked with a high-security lock and is alarmed. Normally the store is attended to by its manager and one employee, who also double as security guards and are armed. When closed, all of the displayed weapons are put into an excellent high security vault. Andre told us that ADT monitored the store and is physically checked every 30 minutes by a roving guard. We observed one camera near the entrance.

¶6. Andre underlined that his company has no business relationship whatsoever with Armeria Rex, a company that has

been found to be an unreliable recipient of USML in the past.

According to Andre, Rex had taken part in an illegal arms trade with companies in Peru and Panama some years ago.

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COMMENT

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17. In Costa Rica the name Armeria J.R. Andre" is synonymous with arms sales and has a respectable reputation throughout the country. This company and a handful of others make up the bulk of all firearms sales in Costa Rica.

CIANCHETTE